

Constructing Kanaka Maoli identity through narrative

A glimpse into native Hawaiian narratives

C. M. Kaliko Baker

The purpose of this chapter is to (1) consider how *Kanaka Maoli*, or Native Hawaiian narratives constructed, and now reconstruct, Kanaka Maoli identity and (2) how identity construction was and is being carried out through Hawaiian-medium newspapers of the 19th and early 20th century. To illustrate identity construction through narrative we will look at how in a *mō'olelo* 'narrative' the narrator illustrates clearly that the protagonist uses his *kūpuna* 'elders, ancestors' to help him on his journey along the temporal lines of the *mō'olelo*. The Kanaka Maoli audience aligns with the protagonist's position and his calling unto the *kūpuna* and knows that s/he too can do the same.

1. Introduction

The Hawaiian language is the language of the indigenous people of Hawai'i. The Hawaiian people, Kanaka Maoli, prior to the arrival of the missionaries in the early 19th century did not have a writing system. Oratory was prized by Kanaka Maoli because it is through oratory that our traditional knowledge was carried on.¹ With the advent of the Hawaiian orthography and Hawaiian-medium newspapers, Hawaiian literacy quickly took off. As one could imagine, being able to publish novel length narratives, inclusive of chants and other cultural knowledge, in the Hawaiian-medium newspapers and distribute them throughout the Hawaiian archipelago propelled Hawaiian knowledge forward. The purpose of this chapter is to explore Kanaka Maoli identity construction in and through narrative by looking at the calling and invocation of *kūpuna* in times of need, which is a practice until today of traditional-minded Kanaka Maoli. In §3 below the

1. I use first person pronouns throughout this chapter to show inclusivity as I, the author, am a Kanaka Maoli.

discussion moves to the establishment of Kanaka Maoli literacy and how Kanaka Maoli of the 19th century embraced this newfound technology of the era to carry on what was once oral into the medium of print.

2. Kanaka Maoli identity constructed through *mó'olelo* and *ka'ao*

In this section we will discuss the Hawaiian terms *mó'olelo* and *ka'ao*, two terms for Hawaiian narratives, and how narratives are conduits of Hawaiian identity informing us Kanaka Maoli on how we should move through this life by looking to and invoking our ancestors, our *kūpuna*.

A glimpse into Hawaiian narrative: A look at *mó'olelo* and *ka'ao* as literary genres

To understand Kanaka Maoli narrative, we must understand the terms that Kanaka Maoli use for narratives (which is how we maintain our historical record). There are two terms that we will consider here, *mó'olelo* and *ka'ao*. The term *mó'olelo* is derived from two words, *mó'o* and *'olelo*. Evidence of *mó'olelo* being comprised of *mó'o* and *'olelo* comes from the synonymous term *mó'ó'olelo*. *Mó'olelo* is by far the more popular of the two terms, especially in modern times. *Mó'olelo* are narratives, where literally *mó'o* are successions of things, e.g., *mó'ókū'auhau* 'genealogy', *kuamó'o* 'spine, path, custom', and *'olelo* is our general term for language. Hence, a *mó'olelo* is any succession of *'olelo*, language, thus, we get *narrative* from *mó'olelo*.

The term *ka'ao*, on the other hand, is for narratives in the folklore genre and/or narratives that are not *kapu* 'taboo'. In the republished version of Lorrin Andrews' 19th century bilingual Hawaiian-English dictionary, Andrews writes that the term *ka'a*, generally meaning anything that rolls, is related to the term *ka'ao* (2003, p. 222). We see that *ka'a* can very well be realized as part of *ka'ao*. The *o* of *ka'ao* is up for debate. It could be derived from *a'o* 'teach, learn', or the more phonetically likely choice *ao* 'light, enlighten, enlightenment'. *Ka'ao*, hence, as a locution, refers to the perpetuation of a narrative from teller to listener.

Beckwith (1970, pp. 1–2) offers her understanding of *mó'olelo* and *ka'ao* in the following passage:

Hawaiians use the term *kaao* for a fictional story or one in which fancy plays an important part, that of *moolelo* for a narrative about a historical figure, one which is supposed to follow historical events. Stories of the gods are *moolelo*. They are distinguished from secular narrative not by name, but by the manner of telling. Sacred stories are told only by day and the listeners must not move in front of

the speaker; to do so would be highly disrespectful to the gods. Folktale in the form of anecdote, local legend, or family story is also classed under *moolelo*. ... Nor can the distinction between *kaao* as fiction and *moolelo* as fact be pressed too closely. It is rather in the intention than in the fact. Many a so-called *moolelo* which a foreigner would reject as fantastic nevertheless corresponds with the Hawaiian view of the relation between nature and man. A *kaao*, although often making adroit use of traditional and amusing episodes, may also proceed quite naturally, the distinction being that it is consciously composed to tickle the fancy rather than to inform the mind as to supposed events. (Beckwith, 1970, pp. 1–2)

Beckwith's albeit brief explanation provides both temporal and situational contexts that distinguishes *moolelo* from *ka'ao*. *Moolelo* are at times strict and *kapu* depending on topic, unlike the secular narrative genre of *ka'ao*. Both *moolelo* and *ka'ao* involve the fantastic, which reflects the Hawaiian's worldview in connection to man and nature, and *moolelo* are meant to inform us of historical events, while *ka'ao* may do the same, *ka'ao* are intended to entertain in more *noa* 'free of taboo' contexts.

Jerome Bruner writes in his discussion of autobiographical narratives, "Why is this worth telling, what's interesting about it?" (2001, p. 29). That is, there is reason to why a narrator puts forth certain information rather than other information. In connecting *ka'a* and *ka'ao*, as Andrews claims to be the case, to *ka'ao* a narrative is to *ka'a*, or roll, the narrative and its contents on in perpetuity, thus, providing for another locution intended by categorizing a narrative as a *ka'ao*. Furthermore, a *ka'ao* is a narrative that provides, in more cases than not, some sort of moral message and/or lesson. The question provided below is patently rhetorical and the response is a clear indication that the intention of publishing *ka'ao* is to instruct through narrative genre. (Another discussion of *moolelo* and *ka'ao* can be found in Baker (2014).)

Heaha ia mau kaa no Iona ia kakou? He mau mea ao mai no laua ia kakou.
 'What is the value of these tales about Jonah for us? They are teaching tools for us.'
 (Ke Kumu Hawaii, 1835, January 7, p. 37)

In line with Beckwith's claims, narratives are termed as *moolelo* in Hawaiian when the topic is historical, i.e., dealing with people who lived before and events that are evidenced through geography or otherwise. It is common practice in Hawaiian storytelling to include the narrative type in the title. For example, in the narrative title below we find the term *moolelo*, thus, classifying and characterizing the text as such. Just as it is common place in Hawaiian *mele* 'song, chant' to call out at its end that the song was one for a particular individual, e.g., "*He mele no Kamapua'a*" 'A song for Kamapua'a', so too is it common practice to be direct in classifying what type of narrative one is within the title.

He Moolelo no Kamapuaa

‘A Historical Account about Kamapua’a’

(Kahiolo, 1861, June 26, p. 4)

Narratives are classified as both *mōolelo* and *ka’ao* at times. In some instances during the run of a periodical in a Hawaiian-medium newspaper, the classification will change. For example, another publication of the story about Kamapua’a began with the title *He Molelo Kaa no Kamapuaa* (Mea Unuhi Moolelo, 1891, June 22, p. 4). The combination of *molelo* (which I assume to be the same as *mōolelo*)² and *ka’ao* indicates the narrative is not only dealing with significant or historical figures, which, thus, elevates the *kapu*, or formalness, of the story telling event (i.e., as *mōolelo*), but will also include passages in connection to the fantastic past, or perhaps there are lessons within the narrative that the audience must be mindful of (i.e., as *ka’ao*). The title of the narrative, without explanation, changes three weeks into the run to *He Moolelo no Kamapuaa* (Mea Unuhi Moolelo, 1891, July 15, p. 4). The word *ka’ao* was removed from the title. Did the author re-categorize the narrative as strictly *mōolelo*? Did the newspaper editor say to change the title? These are questions that we cannot answer with any certainty at this point. However, as Hawaiian is a head-initial language (Baker, 2012), the choice to keep *mōolelo* over *ka’ao* is simple; the head noun of the phrase is kept and the modifier is eliminated.

It is worth mentioning here that reversing the order, e.g., *ka’ao mōolelo*, is rare. In searching through the Ho’olaupa’i database ([/nupepa.org/](http://nupepa.org/)), which is a database of about 75,000 digitized pages of Hawaiian medium newspapers, there were only eight tokens that contained the phrase *ka’ao mōolelo* in comparison to 100 tokens of *mōolelo ka’ao*. Seven tokens of the phrase *ka’ao mōolelo* were in the title to a foreign story, and one was in a traditional Hawaiian narrative. All eight instances of *ka’ao mōolelo* contained the determiner *ke* before it, i.e., *ke ka’ao mōolelo*. The difference between *he* as seen above in *He Moolelo no Kamapuaa* and *ke* as in *ke ka’ao mōolelo* is that *he* is a classificatory determiner and *ke* is a definite article. Hence, we find here that the titles beginning with *he* categorize the narrative with the following lexeme. There are cases where we find *he ka’ao* in titles too. However, *he ka’ao mōolelo* is one that I have not come across. *Ke ka’ao mōolelo* refers to the telling of an account, or an account of some story. Hence, *ka’ao* is not necessarily a category in phrases such as *ke ka’ao*; it references the delivery and/or narrative of the *mōolelo*.

2. It is my understanding that the term *molelo* is used in this title combination because there was there was not enough space in the newspaper column for the second *o* of *moolelo*.

Accessing *kūpuna*: Constructing and reconstructing Kanaka Maoli identity through narratives

Kanahele (2011) illustrates that through analyzing *mele* we find profound knowledge about our Hawaiian history. The title of Kanahele's book is "Ka Honua Ola: 'Eli'eli Kau Mai." Translated, this title means 'The Living Earth: Descend, deepen the revelation.' At every chapters' end, Kanahele closes with the phrase *'eli'eli kau mai*, to urge the reader to *'eli* 'dig' through the layers of meaning within a text so that those meaning *kau mai* 'settle hither' (see Kanahele, 2011, p. 169). Our traditional *mō'olelo maoli* 'indigenous stories' are filled with not only plots and characters, but also code of conduct in connection to general life and extending to high ceremony. In this section we will explore a Kanaka Maoli sense of self. Specifically, we will consider how a Kanaka Maoli believes to constitute him/herself through his/her elders and ancestors, or *kūpuna*. We will find here that Kanaka Maoli are agents who move through life with more than their own personal agency; Kanaka Maoli move through life with the agency of their *kūpuna* as defined through traditional narrative.

Between June 22, 1891 and September 28, 1891, *He Molelo Kaa no Kamapuaa* ran daily in the Hawaiian medium newspaper *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*. Recall the discussion in connection to *mō'olelo ka'ao* above where a *mō'olelo ka'ao* is a historical narrative, i.e., *mō'olelo*, and also one that is intended to instruct through its narrator's voice in a world that is at times fantastic, i.e., *ka'ao*. This narrative recounts Kamapua'a's life, from the union of his grandparents, *kūpuna*, until his final residence in Kahiki. Kamapua'a was a shape-shifter who was born on earth and was later deified by farmers and others. Each installment of the *mō'olelo* began with the *mele inoa* 'name chant' provided below.

<i>O oe ia e Haunuu, e Haulani</i>	You are Haunu'u, Haulani,
<i>E Haalokuloku</i>	Ha'alokuloku,
<i>Ka Mano e ka I'a nui</i>	The Shark, the large fish,
<i>E ui, e Uilani</i>	Ask, Uilani,
<i>Ko inoa Puaa ia e o mai.</i>	It is your Pig name, answer

The first line in this *mele inoa* begins with "O oe ia" 'You are.' This opening clearly indicates that the names within this *mele inoa* are not simply arbitrary names, rather the names within the *mele inoa* are characteristics attributed to Kamapua'a, defining who Kamapua'a is. For example, the name *Haunu'u* has a meaning, proud. *Haulani* means to be constantly on the move. *Ha'alokuloku* implies that Kamapua'a is emotional, flies quickly off the handle. *Ka manō* is the shark, which is *ka i'a nui*, or the big fish. The implication of referring to Kamapua'a as *Ka Manō ka i'a nui* is that he is the strongest, most courageous of his time, and large in stat-

ure standing at about eight feet tall. The name *Uilani* means to question authority. All these names are names of Kamapua'a's *kūpuna* and are also understood as attributes of Kamapua'a's character. Therefore, a Kanaka Maoli who knows this *mele inoa* and the *mō'olelo* about Kamapua'a will take from the narrative that as a Kanaka Maoli s/he is to view himself or herself as the sum of the ancestors who have come before as the narrative clearly illustrates.

Recall Beckwith's discussion of *mō'olelo* above. *Mō'olelo* are stories, or narratives, that at times are *kapu* and require the complete attention of the audience. The narrator here invokes Kamapua'a through his *mele inoa* upon every installment of this *mō'olelo ka'ao*, hence, qualifying the narrative as a *mō'olelo* because with the invocation the *kapu* level increases. This name chant is also used throughout the narrative in the development of Kamapua'a's character in his formative years, during which he was a *pua'a* 'pig', which may also be why this narrative is classified as a *ka'ao* because there is the element of the fantastic. In one case, Kamapua'a in his pig form was nearly killed by his antagonist, his uncle, Olopana, and when his grandmother, Kamaunuanoho, calls his name chant, Kamapua'a was able to regain his full strength and more. Kamapua'a's identity is, thus, constructed through his acknowledgement of his *kūpuna*. The narrator clearly illustrates that Kamapua'a is the sum of his *kūpuna* because, upon invocation by the name chant, Kamapua'a becomes stronger, hence, illustrating the narrator's view of Kamapua'a's identity, that is, through *kūpuna* one finds strength.

In another part of the narrative, Kamapua'a is traveling on the island of Hawai'i on his way to engage in battle with Pele, the goddess of volcanism, who is also a *kupuna* of Kamapua'a. Before embarking upon his journey, he was instructed by his grandmother, Kamaunuanoho, that where he goes, so too will his *kūpuna*, for they have no value if left behind. These *kūpuna* were not only, however, the ones that were physically present with Kamapua'a, but also those who were there in spirit heeding his commands. Kamaunuanoho also told Kamapua'a that the *kūpuna* who failed him were to be banished. What should be gleaned from this instruction given by Kamaunuanoho is that *kūpuna* who serve purpose should be praised, and those that do not should not be praised. We see here again that a Kanaka Maoli's identity is constructed through genealogy and the existing relationships with his/her elders, both present and past. Moreover, we find here that not all *kūpuna* are to be admired, only the ones that serve a purpose. Kanaka Maoli may render from this that if individuals are not of value to them, then those individuals need not be maintained as either kin or friend. Thus, we see here that Kanaka Maoli worldview is influenced by narrative content, shaping the Kanaka Maoli identity.³

3. *Aloha* 'love, compassion, salutation' is not always unconditional; *aloha* is a two-way street where there is an expected reciprocation. This is why when we Kanaka Maoli say "*Aloha!*" as a salutation, we expect a reply of some sort.

Kamapua'a sets out on this journey with his *kūpuna* that Kamaunuaniho said should travel with him. Their travels begin in Kohala on the northern coast of Hawai'i Island and headed south to Ka'ū. Kamapua'a was traveling in his pig form, moving swiftly about the terrain. Upon arriving at the district of Ka'ū, they come upon the home of a *kama'āina* 'person of the land'. Kamapua'a immediately requires his present *kūpuna* to take away and/or hide his pig form from the *kama'āina* so that they do not know who or what Kamapua'a is. The *kūpuna* do so and render Kamapua'a a strappingly beautiful man. The *kama'āina* calls to Kamapua'a and they are hosted well that evening, as is customary of our Kanaka Maoli people. Here we see that Kamapua'a, through his *kūpuna*, finds resolve in his time of need similar to when Kamaunuaniho called upon their *kūpuna* to revive and give life back to Kamapua'a.

Kamapua'a continues his journey around Hawai'i Island heading north to the Puna district and headed up to Akanikōlea on the rim of Halema'uma'u, the famous crater that is the home of Pele until today. This is where Kamapua'a and Pele's battle began. Kamapua'a nearly defeats Pele in battle if it were not for Lonoi-keaweawealoha, a *kupuna* of Kamapua'a, who filled Kamapua'a with compassion for Pele and her people (*Ka Hoku o Hawaii*, 1931, September 29). Pele saw this compassion as an opportunity to retaliate against Kamapua'a. She engages the services of her brother, Lonomakua, the keeper of fire. Lonomakua sets Puna a blaze. Kamapua'a is left with no place to seek refuge. He calls his sister, Leialoha, who passed at a very young age, and upon her death she became an *ua nāulu*, a sudden falling rain. Kamapua'a invokes his sister's name by summoning her with the following *mele*:

<i>Iho mai ana kaua i lalo nei e Leialoha</i>	We are going down, Leialoha,
<i>E Lei Leialoha e -</i>	Ō Lei, Leialoha ē,
<i>O ka haka lei o Paoa</i>	The recipient of garlands of Paoa,
<i>O ka haka lei ana</i>	The recipient of garlands,
<i>O mahele ana ka ua,</i>	Let the rains and the sun separate...
<i>Me ka la e ...</i>	

(Mea Unuhi Moolelo, 1891, July 8, p. 4)

Leialoha's rains come sweeping across Puna, filling Halema'uma'u, nearly extinguishing the fires of the volcano. Kamapua'a survived only because of his calling to his sister Leialoha. In summary of the above, these *mo'olelo* of Kamapua'a are illustrations of how Kamapua'a's identity of self is constructed through his *kūpuna*. By the narrator publishing this historical account and the audience taking in its contents, the audience relates to Kamapua'a as a Kanaka Maoli. Hence, the Kanaka Maoli audience knows that they too, similar to Kamapua'a, are the sums of their ancestors and have the *mana* 'power' to call to them by their names and

invoke their assistance when needed. Narrative is one means through which we Kanaka Maoli construct our identity. In holding on to narratives such as those about Kamapua‘a, we Kanaka Maoli learn about who we were, who we are, and who we can be.

3. Establishing Hawaiian literacy

We will begin here by contextualizing the historical events that lead up to Hawaiian-medium literacy. In 1810 King Kamehameha unified the Hawaiian kingdom. Upon King Kamehameha’s passing in 1819, his son, Liholiho, acceded to the throne. Ka‘ahumanu, a favorite wife of Kamehameha, persuaded Liholiho, Kamehameha II, to abolish the *kapu* ‘taboo’ system, which was the traditional Hawaiian religious system.⁴ They did so by eating together, as men and women were forbidden to do by religious order. The taboo of men and women eating together is known as *‘aikapu*. Ka‘ahumanu and Liholiho’s proselytism, and the proclamation of this as common practice, was called *‘ainoa* ‘free-eating’. This illustrates the power held by Ka‘ahumanu and is indicative of the significant changes happening at the time. Within two years of the *‘ainoa*, under Liholiho’s leadership and Ka‘ahumanu’s guidance, written Hawaiian had come into existence.

It was after the *‘ainoa* that in 1820 the missionaries began arriving in the Hawaiian Islands. As part of Kanaka Maoli proselytism, the missionaries sought to translate the Bible from Hebrew into Hawaiian, and in doing so, they began to develop a writing system for the Hawaiian language. The interest in and growth of literacy began in royal court settings and by 1825 the interest in the printed word was so great that Kauikeaouli, Kamehameha III, assuming the throne after his brother’s untimely death, proclaimed, “‘O ko‘u aupuni, he aupuni palapala ko‘u.” ‘As for my nation, I will have a literate nation’ (Kamakau, 2001, p. 24). By 1826, a Hawaiian alphabet was agreed upon, district schools were established, and in 1831, the Lāhaināluna Seminary was founded as a teachers college to support the national drive for literacy.⁵ Young Hawaiian men of promise were sent to Lāhaināluna to be educated by the missionaries. Two famous Hawaiian scholars who attended the seminary were David Malo who authored *Moolelo Hawaii* (which was later translated by N. B. Emerson, 1971) and Samuel M. Kamakau who went on to publish prolifically for over 40 years during the period

4. It should be noted here that the overthrow of some aspects of the *kapu* system occurs well before the first missionaries ever sighted these islands with the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778.

5. See Schütz (1994) for a discussion on the establishment of Hawaiian orthography.

of the monarchy (Nogelmeier, 2010). The Lāhaināluna Seminary housed the first Hawaiian printing press, namely Hale Pa‘i, which still exists today as a monument to our Kanaka Maoli literary history.

Proselytism and missionary voice

In February 1834, the Hale Pa‘i of the Lāhaināluna Seminary published the first Hawaiian-medium newspaper named *Ka Lama Hawaii* ‘The Hawaiian Luminary’. This ignited an expansion in Hawaiian literacy and marks the beginning of what would become a significant corpus of Hawaiian texts. Hawaiian-medium newspapers ran from 1834 until 1948 and during that time it is estimated that around 125,000 pages of Hawaiian-medium newspapers were published (Nogelmeier, 2010).⁶ The newspapers were distributed throughout the Hawaiian archipelago creating a nation of news consumers. It is estimated that literacy in Hawai‘i reached 90% during this period (Grenoble & Whaley 2006).

However, according to Nogelmeier (2010, p. 58), “Hawaiian language newspapers were established as an organ of the Hawaiian mission culture.” By this he means that the missionaries used the Hawaiian newspapers to not only spread literacy, but also a Christian education. *Ka Lama Hawaii*, for example, was a mission paper. Not long after *Ka Lama Hawaii* came out in February 1834, *Ke Kumu Hawaii* followed on November 12, 1834. More newspapers soon followed suit. The goal of these mission papers seemed apparent: through Christian values and beliefs written in the aboriginal’s language, the heathen aboriginals will be saved. Silva (2004) writes that the discourse in the missionary newspapers, a clear reflection of the missionary perspective, was that the “*haole* ways of life are *na‘auao* and Kanaka ways are *na‘aupō*” (p. 59).⁷ One of the missionaries’ first tasks was to infiltrate the Kanaka mind. There was no more effective way to do that than through the language and the newspapers, a conduit of narratives at the time. *Ke Kumu Hawaii* predominantly consisted of articles about Sunday school, Christian hymns, and how idol worship, amongst other traditional religious practices, were obsolete and to be shunned. Those who followed the Christian faith were praised for doing so, and those who did not were condemned. Consider the following passage from *Ke Kumu Hawaii*, April 15, 1835, p. 92:

6. As may be apparent by this point, one should see Nogelmeier (2010) for a detailed discussion on the history of Hawaiian-medium newspapers and its importance as a literary canon.

7. Silva (2004, p. 59) translates *na‘auao* as enlightened and/or civilized and juxtaposes that to *na‘aupō* ‘unenlightened, uncivilized’. The term Kanaka here refers to the aboriginal people of Hawai‘i.